



Making Great Communities Happen
**Connecticut Chapter of the
American Planning Association
Government Relation Committee**

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POSITION STATEMENT

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE – MARCH 4, 2011

BILL:

- **SB 686 An Act Concerning Applications to the State Traffic Commission and a Study of Land Use Permitting Procedures**

OVERVIEW: This bill would prohibit the State Traffic Commission from requiring local approval of an activity before accepting an application for STC review. The bill would also require an analysis by the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee of local and state-wide land use permitting requirements and procedures.

ANALYSIS: SB 686 appears to offer applicants for STC approval the option of filing with the STC before local approvals are obtained. Although this may afford applicants some scheduling review, it could also create additional workload for the STC involving projects that have no realistic chance of local approval or that require modification and possible re-review by the STC in the course of local review.

The second section of the bill requires what could be a significant effort to evaluate land use permitting requirements and procedures at the state and local levels. There is considerable variation in land use permitting and multiple approaches are applied to land use regulations throughout Connecticut. While some standardization may in fact be desirable, a study of this magnitude could require significant resources and time.

RECOMMENDATIONS: CCAPA expects that the STC and others with direct experience with the STC procedures will provide more specific recommendations and CCAPA will be pleased to provide further comment on any such specific ideas. In general, however, CCAPA recommends careful consideration of the possible impacts of any such change in the permitting process, as there may be unidentified complications that could in fact create new delays or inadequacies in the overall land use approval process.

Regarding the land use permitting study, CCAPA recommends that the Committee consider specific resources and stakeholders that should be consulted by the Program Review and Investigations Committee in the study's preparation. Of course, CCAPA will be available and willing to provide its extensive expertise in this area as well as access to our direct contact with planning and land use

practitioners who may offer the most current and the complete information available. Other possible participants include the Center for Land Use Education and Research, the Connecticut Home Builders' Association, Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, and the Connecticut Bar Association, Planning and Zoning Section.

Additionally, although the draft bill does specify consideration of state and local interactions, the Committee may wish to specify several other topics for review, including technical review responsibilities; intra-state agency interactions as well as state and local agency interactions; the role of the State Conservation and Development Policies Plan; and consistency of review guidelines in state, local, and regional plans, and state statutes. The Committee should consider including a specific set of objectives for the proposed analysis to guide its preparation.

CCAPA POSITION: CCAPA takes no position regarding the timing of applications to the STC. However, we believe further analysis of potential impacts is necessary before adopting any such changes and therefore CCAPA does not support this component of SB 686 as currently drafted.

CCAPA does support the analysis of land use permitting and procedures as proposed conceptually by SB 686, although, as noted, we believe such analysis should involve a wide range of stakeholders and expertise and should be more deliberately defined before assignment to another legislative committee. CCAPA supports efforts to identify and implement opportunities for improving land use planning and regulatory procedures and agrees that proper planning principles require an evaluation of current conditions, as this bill proposes. We will be pleased to make available expert planners and apply our communications network to assist whatever entity or committee is eventually charged with preparing this analysis.